

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

1-17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently amended) A method for determining the presence of Hepatitis C virus (HCV) core antigen and/or anti-HCV core antibodies in a sample, at the same time, in the same vessel, using (1) antibodies for the detection of HCV core antigen and (2) at least one peptide for the detection of core antibodies wherein the at least one peptide lacks epitopes recognized by said antibodies for detection of HCV core antigen, comprising the steps of:

(a) contacting the sample (1) with an antibody or antibodies for detection of HCV core antigen and (2) with the at least one peptide for detection of the anti-HCV core antibodies, and

(b) detecting (1) the HCV core antigen by an antibody or antibodies for detection of the HCV core antigen, ~~or~~ and (2) the anti-HCV core antibodies.

19. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 18, wherein said antibodies for detection of HCV core antigen are selected from antibodies recognizing and binding to a region from position 100 to position 130 or from position 41 to 50 of an HCV polyprotein (HCV core antigen) ~~and wherein said peptide(s) is peptide(s) which lacks epitopes recognized by said antibodies for detection of HCV core antigen.~~

20. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 18, wherein ~~said antibodies for detection of HCV core antigen are antibodies recognizing and binding to a region from position 100 to position 130 of an HCV polyprotein (HCV core antigen) and wherein said peptide is peptide which lacks epitopes recognized by said antibodies for detection of HCV core antigen.~~

21. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 18, wherein said sample is contacted with said antibodies for detection of HCV core antigen and said at least one peptide in

the presence of one or more detergents with one or more alkyl chains of at least 10 carbon atoms and one or more secondary to quaternary amines, or one or more non-ionic surfactants or both.

22. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 18 21, wherein said detergent alkyl chain and secondary to quaternary amine is a surfactant with 12 to 16 carbon atoms and a tertiary or quaternary amine.